



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

February 24, 2006

The Honorable Mike Johanns
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250-0002

Dear Secretary Johanns,

We all recognize the federal budget is under stress and some programs have been cut substantially. However, I would like to bring an equity issue to your attention.

I represent Wapello County, Iowa, whose principal town is Ottumwa. Wapello County is in a joint commodity food program with Polk County, whose principal town is Des Moines. In this program, a directive was apparently issued to eliminate 9.2 percent of beneficiaries. Instead of making this cut across-the-board, I have been informed that 100 percent will be eliminated in Ottumwa. The effect on my constituents is not equal to the effects in Polk County, although, ironically, Ottumwa is a community more economically disadvantaged than Des Moines.

I write to request the USDA to look into this matter with a goal of ensuring equity.

In the large scheme of the USDA budget this may appear to be a small issue. But there is no greater requirement of the American people than social fairness, what might be defined as justice.

Federal social programs can never be perfect or all things to all people. But they should never be beneficial to some while ignoring others who are in a similar situation.

Sincerely,

James A. Leach
Member of Congress

JL:jd

